

# Natural Resources Conservation Service partnering with Tribes

## Funding Obligated to Tribes by County (2013)

County	Sum of \$ Obligated
Clallam	\$48,285.00
Ferry	\$176,652.00
Grays Harbor	\$195,592.00
Okanogan	\$159,660.00
Snohomish	\$60,617.00
Stevens	\$139,815.00
Whatcom	\$84,532.00
Yakima	\$404,763.00
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,269,916.00</b>

Source: IDEAMapIt Data Extract and ProTracts, Dec. 28, 2012



Aerial view of Braget Marsh.

## Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC)

The Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC) is comprised of representatives from participating tribes and members of NRCS State Leadership. WATCAC serves in an advisory role to NRCS regarding programs, practice standards and tribal resource priorities. In FY12, NRCS entered into an agreement with the Colville Tribal Conservation District to assist with coordinating WATCAC teleconferences and organize the yearly face-to-face meeting.

All tribes are welcome to participate in the monthly WATCAC meetings/ teleconferences. Tribes who submit resolutions declaring participation in and appointing representatives to the WATCAC have voting privileges. If your tribe is considering participation and/or a resolution, please contact your NRCS tribal liaison.

## Braget Marsh returned to natural condition

Prior to the early 1900s, Braget Marsh was an estuarine system at the mouth of the Nisqually River that supported a wide diversity of species. Salmon thrived in the natural habitat as they transitioned from fresh water to salt water and back again. Diking began on the Marsh in 1905 and continued over a period of many years to prevent tidal influence and salt water intrusion. This made it possible to convert the wetlands to dairy, livestock and crop production. It remained drained and in agricultural production for many years. This condition was markedly different from most other estuaries in the Puget Sound region, many of which had been dredged and converted into harbors and ports.

After his retirement from farming, Kenny Braget decided that his land should be returned to its natural state. Therefore, instead of selling it to someone interested in continuing traditional farming operations, he sold the land in 2000 to the Nisqually Indian Tribe, who were committed to the restoration. Many partners worked on the site to remove and break dikes, restore hydraulic connectivity, and re-vegetate the system. Reforestation and vegetation conversion included restoration of some 54 acres by NRCS, who installed 42,000 trees and shrubs throughout the area with funding under the Wetlands Reserve Program. Since installation, the site has developed into an animal reserve that harbors many wildlife and bird species. The area is frequented by many wildlife viewers, and surveys indicate that salmon are returning in increasing numbers to the Nisqually River. The overall success of this project was due to the support of many partners, volunteers, and tribal members to keep the Nisqually River delta a pristine system for all future generations to enjoy. The next time you drive across the Nisqually on Interstate 5, take a few minutes to enjoy the scenery, walk the interpretive trails across tidal lands and be proud of the work in which you, as part of NRCS, have been involved.





*Prairie Creek before treatment.*

### **Prairie Creek knotweed and reed canary grass control**

In 2007 NRCS and the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) develop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. The IPM provided strategies for prevention, avoidance, monitoring, and suppression of invasive plant species and other pests.

Currently, QIN is using IPM strategies to control knotweed, an invasive species, in 135 acres of riparian forest along an 8 mile stretch of Prairie Creek, a tributary to the Quinault River noted for one of the most productive steelhead and salmon spawning areas.

Control of Giant, Japanese, and Himalayan knotweeds was identified as a treatment priority in the IPM plan. Knotweed is a strongly rhizomatous perennial species with lateral rooting up to 30ft, growing up to 12 feet in height and in very large patches, dominating the native plant community. The knotweed forms a closed canopy and shades out the existing plant communities, forming a monoculture. This species is not used by wildlife for forage or habitat. Control of invasive weed species in riparian forests contributes to restoration of habitat critical to fish and wildlife by allowing desirable plant communities to respond, expand, and reoccupy habitat following weed control activities.

WA State Salmon Recovery Funding Board funded the first five years of knotweed suppression in Prairie Creek. The area of knotweed infestation was reduced by 95 percent. NRCS provided financial assistance to implement the prevention, avoidance, and monitoring strategies of the IPM plan and to document the results of the suppression activities. NRCS also contributed funding to plant Sitka Spruce in small portions of the treatment area. Accepted, long-term, control strategies developed by Extension and state Weed Control agencies include several years of follow-up spraying of re-sprouts which are activated from either dormant rhizome nodes or the end of the rooting structure that may not have been affected by the treatment.

Without this follow-up control work, the knotweed once again will quickly dominate the site.



*After treatment: native plant regrowth.*

Therefore, NRCS is now providing financial assistance to implement weed control and habitat management practices and fully restore riparian forest habitat in Prairie Creek watershed through 2016.

NRCS is also helping QIN to control reed canary grass, another invasive species, which has become established in some of the knotweed treatment areas with the capacity to dominate small waterways making them unusable for spawning habitat by salmonids.

Integral to a successful suppression strategy is continual monitoring of the response by native species to the removal of the weed species and that is an important component in the current conservation plan developed by NRCS and QIN. Implementation of the monitoring strategy will help guide QIN's continuing effort to restore and maintain the native riparian forest in Prairie Creek and throughout the Quinault Indian Reservation.

Other QIN knotweed treatment projects include four acres of suppression along Lunch Creek (funded by NRCS 2010-2012) Lower Quinault River tributaries (2010-Ongoing) Quinault River, Lake Quinault shoreline and the town of Neilton (off reservation).



## NRCS partners with tribes on invasive Japanese oyster drill control



*Oyster drill damage.*

Japanese oyster drill are an invasive species of snail that feed on shellfish and barnacles. They are called “drills” because the snail attaches itself to the outer shell of the mollusk and then drills a small hole through the shell allowing it to eat the

meat inside. Their presence is both detrimental to the production of shellfish and to the environment.

In 2013 the NRCS began working with tribes and individual shellfish producers to monitor and remove Japanese oyster drill from shellfish beds as a new practice under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

This was the first year that shellfish-related resource concerns were included under EQIP. NRCS agreed to this approach as a result of concerns registered by both tribes and individual shellfish producers.

Under EQIP, the Squaxin Island Tribe enrolled 4.5 acres of their clam beds in Oyster Bay in the program and the Nisqually Indian Tribe enrolled 14.7 acres of their oyster beds in Henderson Inlet.

As part of the contract, clients are asked to keep a record of when they are monitoring and harvesting drill. They record the dates each activity occurs, and the amount of drill removed from the bed in gallons. Information collected will help NRCS better understand the species, and formulate a management strategy. In this way, NRCS is working with shellfish producers to remove and control an invasive species that is detrimental to shellfish production and the environment.

The inclusion of shellfish-related resource concerns under EQIP this year has opened the door to treating additional shellfish-related resource concerns in the future. Tribes and individual shellfish producers have expressed excitement at the opportunity to partner with the NRCS on shellfish-related conservation issues in the future.



*A large pile of shellfish substrate.*

## Shellfish substrate for habitat creation in Puget Sound

Also this year, Angela Reese developed a Pacific Salmon Habitat Improvement Partnership contract with the Nisqually Indian Tribe, who has partnered with Puget Sound Restoration Fund. The contract involves the placement of five acres of shellfish substrate over three years. The project will result in restoration of near shore substrate, a rare and declining habitat which supplies an essential prey element critical to the salt water phase of salmonids life history.

Additionally, this project helps to achieve a 10 year, 100 acre native oyster restoration campaign in Puget Sound to rebuild breeding populations of declining Olympia oysters in order to restore a habitat feature that is currently missing from the lower intertidal.

**WANT MORE TRIBAL INFO?**  
**Contact Washington NRCS**

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